

WFO Billings Best Practice: Division of IFPS Grids and Duties

Dan Borsum

Billings is an office where the workload can vary significantly, with non routine product issuances requiring a tremendous amount of staff time. Since June 21st, Billings has issued 92 severe weather warnings and 118 spot forecasts. To be able to handle this type of variance in the workload, the staff needs to be as flexible as possible, perhaps even as flexible as:

PLASTICMAN!

This summer, the Billings office faced additional challenges which will be discussed later, but lets look at the routine workload under the IFPS era at Billings, and determine a recommend division of duties that allows for maximum flexibility.



Step 1: Dividing up the GRIDS! (Dayshift)

With fire weather preparation included with the IFPS duties, there are 16 sets of grids that have to be prepared with varying time ranges:

Element	Times	Comment
1 Temp	Hourly to day 7	Interpolated from Max and Min grids
2, 3 Max T/Min T	To day 7	
4 T trend	1 st 2 periods Max	Smart tool generated
5 Dewpoint Max/Min	6 hourly/4 periods	
6,7 Max RH/Min RH	2 periods each	Smart tool generated
8 RH Trend	2 periods	Smart Tool generated
9 Wind	To day 5	
10 Ridge Top Wind	4 periods	
11 Sky	To day 7	
12 Weather	To day 7	
13 Pop	To day 7	
14 CWR	4 periods	
15 LAL	4 periods	
16 Haines	4 periods	

Two approaches to dividing up the grids were considered. Having the forecaster that was assigned the extended and fire weather prepare those specific grids, with the other forecaster preparing the grids pertinent to the short term public forecast out to 3 days. Or having one forecaster prepare all of the grids for the first 2 or 3 days, with the other forecaster preparing the grids for the later periods. Which would you choose?

Step 2: Dividing up the workload (Dayshift)

The following duties need to be covered on the day shift:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| A. Day 1-3 Forecast | E. Extended Forecast |
| B. TAFS | F. Spot Forecasts |
| C. TWBs | G. Discussions |
| D. Fire Weather Forecast | H. Convective Warnings |

But Billings had an additional consideration this summer. The office had 4 new general forecasters (3 of which who were brand new to the NWS) who were not certified to issue spots or fire weather forecasts and also had to spin up on radar training including DLOC (remember those 36 warning days!) Did this mean that the same person who would issue the Day 1-3 forecast would also provide fire weather services. **(A lot of workload, potential revolt by senior forecasters!)**

Step 3: The Solution (Dayshift)

The Billings staff came up with the following recommended division of workload, which can always be adjusted if conditions warrant:

Forecaster A	Forecaster B
All grids to day 2	All grids day 3 and beyond
TAFS	TWBs
Public Discussion	Fire Weather Discussion 6 to 10 day fire weather
	Spot Forecasts

For a majority of time this summer, the senior forecasters worked the B workload, while the generals handled the A duties. This allowed the new forecasters to begin to forecast fire weather elements (CWR/Haines/LAL) without being required to write discussions or spot forecasts. This solution is only a recommendation, and forecasters would often look at the daily situation and move duties around to accommodate operational training on shift duties (for new folks) or focal point responsibilities.